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ARGENTINA

Security forces are bracing for possible major violence by leftist extremists on Friday, the third anniversary of the killing by the government of 17 captured terrorists said to be attempting to escape. The left often cites this incident in support of claims of government repression and to justify its own violent tactics.

An additional justification this year for major violence was last week's particularly brutal murder of the family of one of those shot in the escape attempt three years ago. A heretofore unknown group, presumably rightist in orientation and possibly connected to the well-publicized Anti-Communist Alliance, claimed credit for the murders. In the course of the theft this week of a military munitions truck, terrorists killed an army captain. A note found at the scene claimed that the two principal leftist guerrilla groups had acted jointly and planned to retaliate for the murder of the family.

In recent weeks, the number of killings and bombings by the left has been on the rise. Among the victims has been the mayor of the capital city of Buenos Aires Province. Yesterday, leftist extremists launched gun and bomb attacks against government buildings and an army barracks in the industrial city of Cordoba, reportedly killing 5 policemen and wounding 26 civilians.

Although leftist violence has plagued the country since 1969, officials have not seen it as a threat to the survival of governments. Indeed, full-scale antisubversive efforts—as opposed to retaliation in kind—have been slow to materialize and have made only modest headway.

Since the departure of Lopez Rega, widely thought to be backing the Anti-Communist Alliance, the administration has been at pains to change its rightist image. It has, for example, eased restraints on the previously heavily censored press and fired numerous officials connected with Lopez Rega. Last week's murders will hurt that effort, but of itself the event constitutes only an irritant to the left, whose goal all along has been to spark a popular uprising that would bring down the government. [redacted]

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